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Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

As the mother of a young adult with autism and intellectual disability I know very well how important the services from the Department of Developmental Disabilities are. It is important DDS funding is not only maintained but increased over the last budget.

My son, Eric, is 23 years old and works at LARC in Torrington putting together parts for car headrests. Because of the funding through DDS for Eric's program, he is a productive happy member of the state's workforce. Eric loves his job.

We were fortunate when Eric graduated from high school. His case manager helped us to find the program that meets Eric's needs and his school, River Street School, provided staff to accompany him as he learned the tasks. Because there was funding for Eric's program at graduation, he then moved seamlessly from school life to work life. Eric did not lose skills and my husband, Mark, and I have been able to continue to work as well. This is because the DDS budget had funds to provide for Eric's program.

Another service our family receives through DDS is respite. Last October, Mark and I were able to get away just the two of us for the first time in five years. Eric stayed at the Torrington Family Respite Center for two nights. Eric had a great time visiting the New England Air Museum and bowling. Mark and I enjoyed having the freedom to go places that were noisy, required waiting in line and allowed adult conversation – all things that are difficult when Eric is with us.

At this time, with the supports from DDS, Eric is able to be part of the community. Our family is worried, however, about what will happen in the future. Every year the DDS budget is cut or threatened to be cut. There is a waiting list for appropriate housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. At current DDS budget levels, Eric will live with my husband and I until we are either too ill to care for him or we die. Over the years as Eric has transitioned from one school to another and from school to work he has been successful because the transition has been planned. When it comes time for Eric to transition to a new home, it will be important for my husband and I to plan the move. The Department of Developmental Services needs the funds to provide housing for all individuals who require it. Families need to know the funds are available so they may plan the major transition of their adult children out of their homes into new homes.

Please allocate sufficient funds to the Department of Developmental Services so they may continue to fund current and new graduates' day programs, provide respite services to families, and eliminate the wait list for housing.

Sincerely,

Beth Lambert